Fitzroy Provincial Park Management Plan 1984

Ministry of
Natural
Resources

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Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources

APPROVAL STATEMENT

1985 03

We are pleased to approve the Fitzroy Provincial Park Management Plan as official policy for the management and development of this park. The plan reflects the ministry's intent to protect the natural and cultural features of Fitzroy and maintain high quality opportunities for outdoor recreation and heritage appreciation for residents of Ontario and visitors to the province.

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Regional Director
Eastern Region

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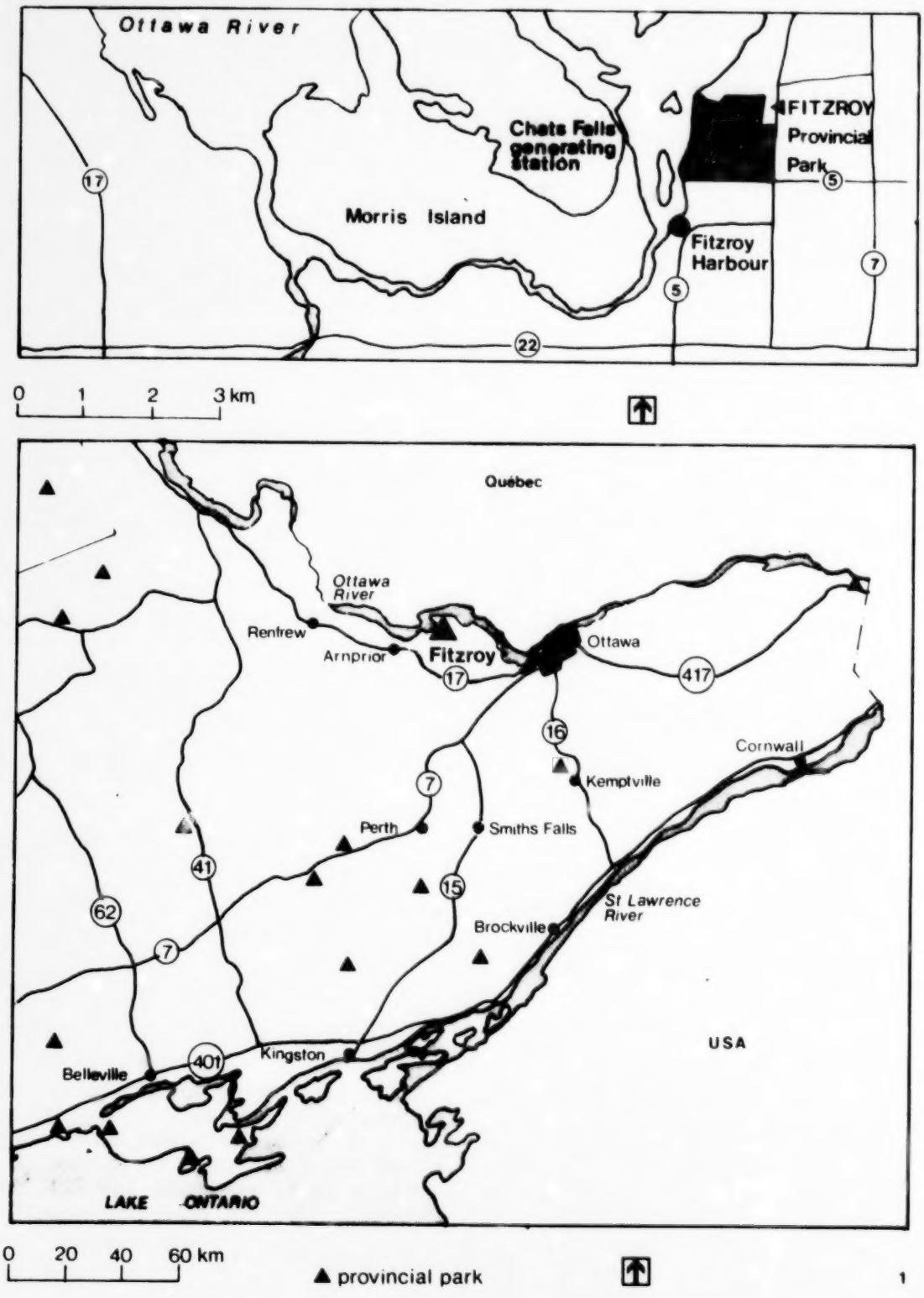
COVER PHOTO:

Shirreff's 'Point House', built 1819
Photo circa 1855 as
Rev. A. Henderson's residence
National Photography Collection
Public Archives Canada PA 121 593

figure 1

Regional context



1.0 INTRODUCTION

Fitzroy Provincial Park occupies 185 ha along the Ottawa River Valley about 60 km northwest of Ottawa and 20 km east of Arnprior. See Figure 1. On its south boundary is the Village of Fitzroy Harbour. Directly west is Ontario Hydro's generating station at Chats Falls. Land within the park was first settled in 1819 and farmed intermittently until its establishment as a provincial park in 1959. [9:11-13] [4]

The previous levels of proglacial and inland sea waters which occupied the Ottawa River Valley are evident in terraces between the height of land at the park entrance and the beach on the shore of the Ottawa River. Glacial rivers, forming channels, cut into sediments laid down millions of years before. When this happened the various layers of bedrock displaying the geological history of the region were exposed. The Carp River bisects the park before emptying into the Ottawa River. Its flow, sluggish in midsummer, has exposed outcrops which display more of the geological history.

Remnants of the mixed forest typical of the area still exist and formerly cleared areas are in various stages of natural succession or plantation growth. With the diverse range in soil moisture and depth in the park and various degrees of vegetative succession, a wide variety of plant communities and habitats exist.

In and around the park are reminders of the Ottawa Valley's history as a travelway for fur brigades and of the logging industry which was concurrent with agricultural settlement.

Today, park visitors can enjoy swimming in the Ottawa River, camping at one of 248 sites located in two campgrounds and picnicking near the beach or on the bluffs overlooking the valley. Six popular group camps with a capacity of 600 are used by institutional, non-profit organizations and by adult groups. The park has a boat launch and dock and many kilometres of trails to explore. See Figure 2.

1.1 Issues

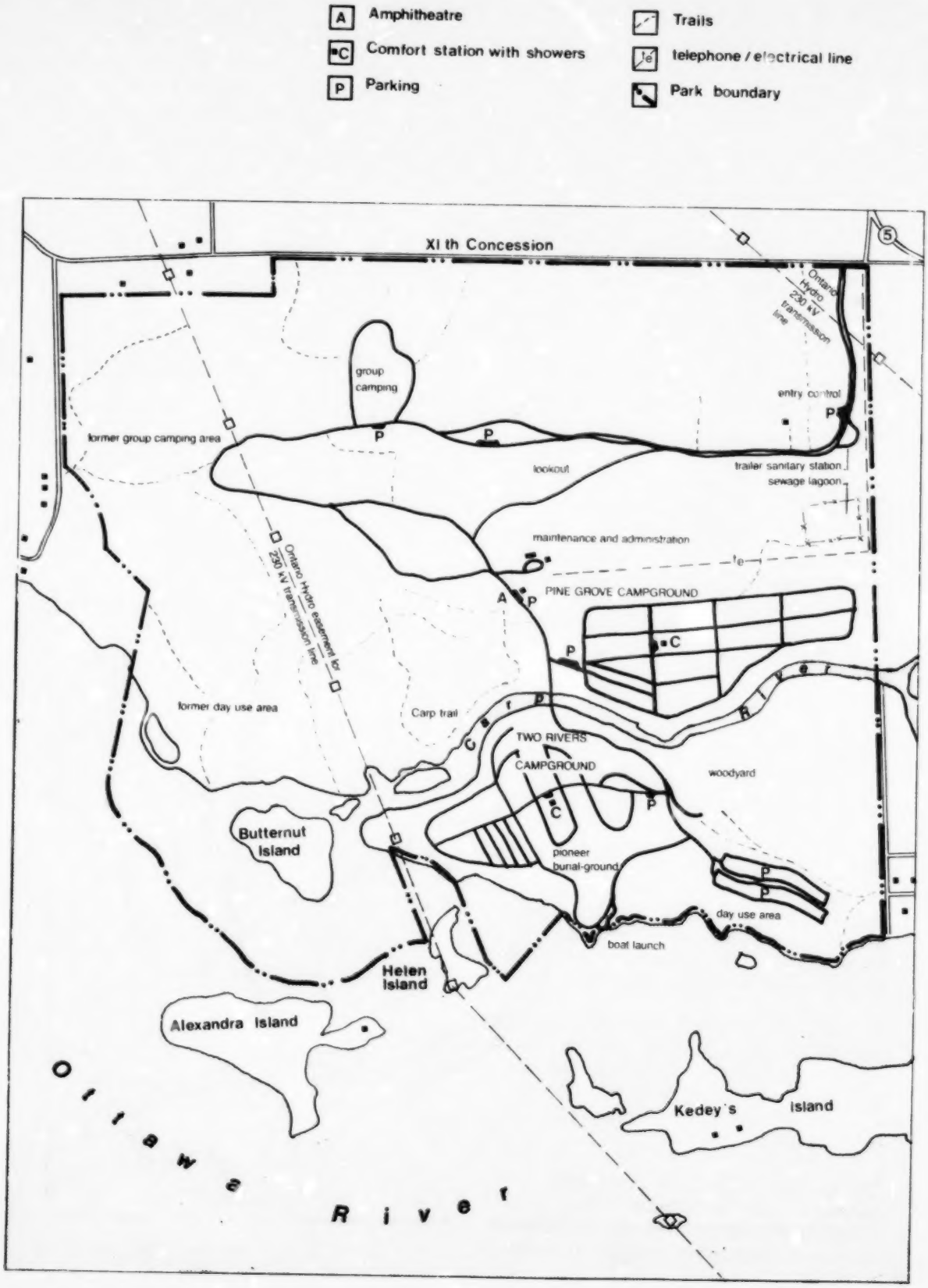
Frequently beaches along the Ottawa River downstream from Fitzroy have been closed due to pollution. This causes crowding at Fitzroy's beaches. Expansion of the park's beach facilities will be undertaken to accommodate some of this demand.

Pine plantations will be managed over the long term to restore a more natural character to these areas.

The park boundary will be extended to allow proper management of park use and facilities. This extension will incluce 11.4 ha of the Ottawa River parallel to the water's edge. Ontario Hydro's rights in this area will remain intact.

Figure 2

Existing development



2.0 PARK POLICIES

2.1 Classification

"Recreation Parks are areas which support a wide variety of outdoor recreation opportunities for large numbers of people in attractive surroundings." [15] Fitzroy is classified as a Recreation Park providing quality camping, picnicking and swimming in a natural setting for visitors to and from the Ottawa area. The park contains several cultural, geological and vegetation features which are representative in the provincial park system. As well, the park has geological and cultural features of regional significance.

2.2 Park Goal

The goal for Fitzroy Provincial Park is to provide a range of year-round recreational opportunities within the capabilities of the land base while encouraging the appreciation of Ottawa Valley heritage.

2.3 Objectives [14]

2.3.1 Protection

. To protect provincially significant elements of the natural and cultural landscape of Ontario.

Two small parcels are designated as historical zones, one to protect the Shirreff building foundations and the other to protect a pioneer burial-ground. Locally significant natural values of the park will be protected through appropriate zoning and management policies. For example, the bluff areas, representing the former banks of the Ottawa, will be protected through designation as a natural environment zone. This zone also protects an example of the southern mixed forest region along with geological and geomorphological features. See Figure 3.

2.3.2 Recreation

. To provide provincial park day use and facility-based camping opportunities in an attractive setting.

The long-standing use of the park for picnicking and camping will be maintained and encouraged. Fitzroy Provincial Park annually provides recreational opportunities as follows. (Shown in brackets is % of Carleton Place District supply.)

swimming	20 457	(31%)
picnicking	45 276	(26%)
camping	63 190	(31%)

Additional opportunities are possible with further development as described in sections 5.3 and 5.5.

2.3.3 Heritage Appreciation

. To provide opportunities for exploration and appreciation of the outdoor natural and cultural heritage of Ontario.

Fitzroy's special places and features, the pioneer home sites and burial-grounds, the logging, fur trade and geology stories will be interpreted through outdoor exhibits, publications, trail guides and word of mouth.

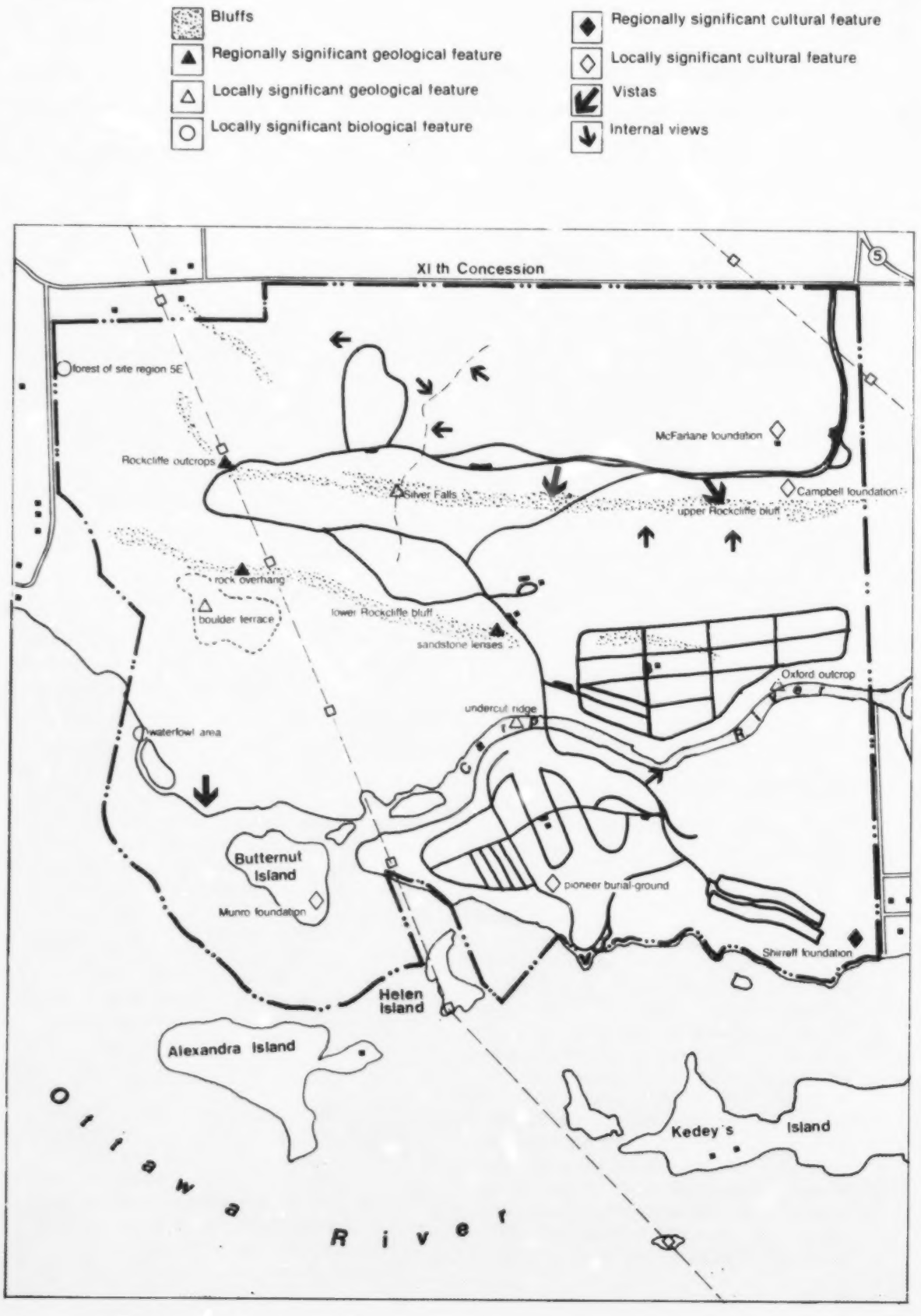
2.3.4 Tourism

. To provide Ontario residents and visitors from outside the province opportunities to discover and experience the distinctive regions of the province.

As a base for exploration of the local area, the Ottawa Valley and the National Capital, Fitzroy Provincial Park will promote local tourism by providing visitors and residents of Ontario with day use and camping facilities.

Figure 3

Significant features



2.4 Park Boundary

To allow proper management of park use and facilities the park boundary will be extended to cover a water area of approximately 11.4 ha. Two parcels are to be included. One comprising 10.7 ha, is a 150 m band along the Ottawa River parallel to the water's edge from Helen Island to the intersection of a 150 m southwesterly continuation into the Ottawa River of the park's most southerly boundary. The other is a 0.7 ha water area bounded by Helen Island, the shore and the limits of Ontario Hydro's right-of-way. These areas are shown in Figure 5.

2.5 Zoning

Three types of zones are designated to guide the management of the park: two development zones, two historical zones and a natural environment zone. See Figure 4. All areas will be managed in accordance with ministry management guidelines for the type of zone. [14]

2.5.1 Development Zones

Development Zone D1 (79.7 ha) consists of two lobes separated by the Carp River natural environment zone. It encompasses the existing day use and campground facilities and areas with potential for campground expansion. The 11.4 ha water area expansion falls within this zone.

A second development zone, D2 (22.6 ha), contains the existing entrance road and the upper terrace picnic area, as well as present and potential group camping areas. The primary function of these zones is to accommodate intensive recreational use in areas where it can be sustained.

2.5.2 Historical Zones

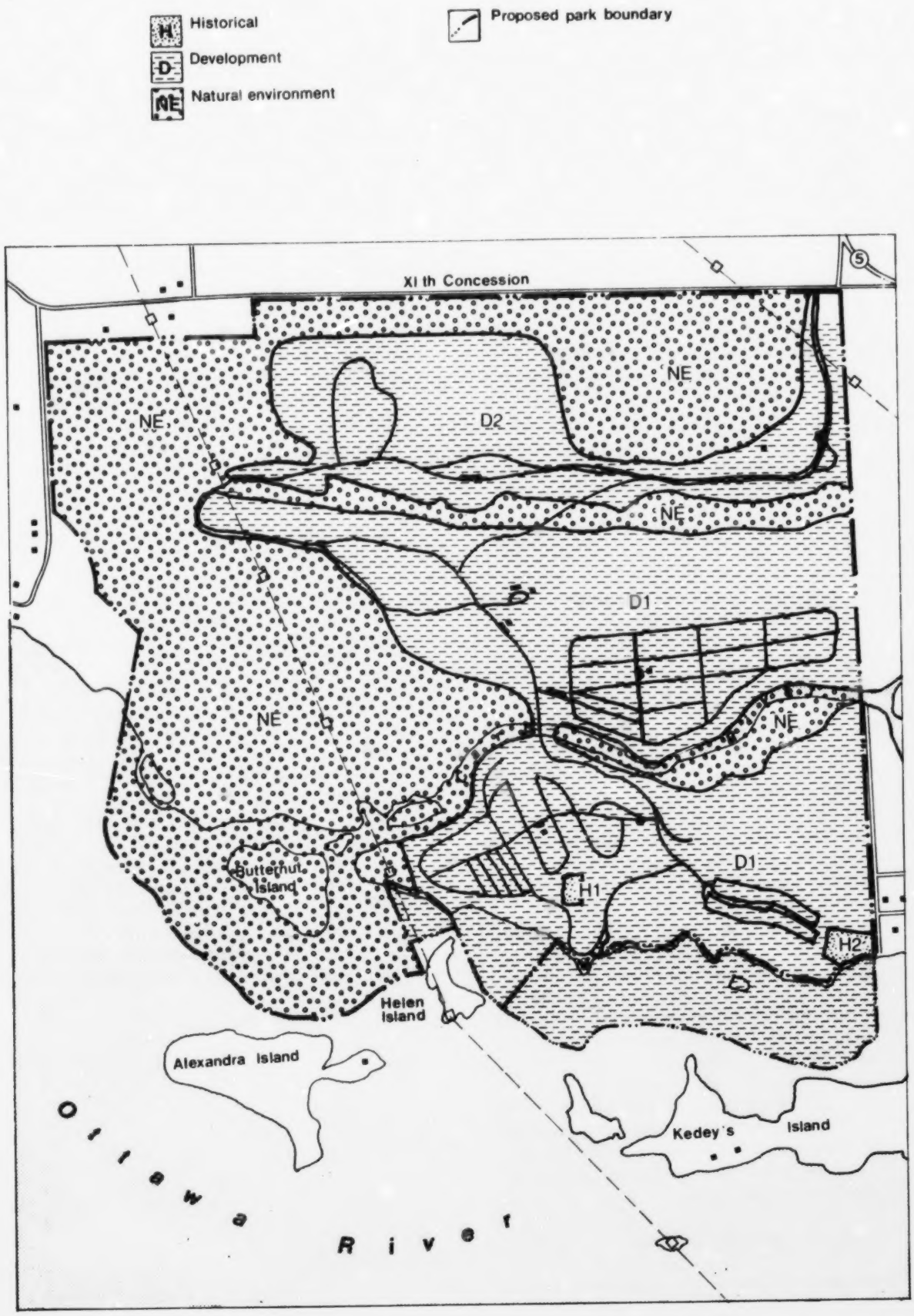
These two small parcels include H1 (0.366 ha), a pioneer burial-ground; and the Shirreff building foundations H2 (0.86 ha). Management will focus on scientific research, maintenance and protection of these two sites and on supporting their exploration and appreciation by visitors.

2.5.3 Natural Environment Zone

Those parts of the park designated natural environment (92.9 ha) include blocks of land in the northeast and northwest of the park and corridors along the escarpment ridge and the Carp River. This zoning protects a locally significant example of the southern mixed forest region of site district 6-12. A distinctive feature of this forest is the white pine which drew the lumbermen up the Ottawa Valley. The shales and limestones of the Rockcliffe Formation along the upper bluff and small outcrops of the Ottawa Formation on the flats above, fall within the protection of this zone. Also included in this zone are lands which are best suited for less intensive use due to slope, drainage or soil condition. Management of the natural environment zone will focus on encouraging plantations and old farm fields to return to natural conditions; reducing the impact of foot traffic around sensitive areas and along trails; and maintaining aesthetic quality especially along the hydro line rights-of-way where vegetation control is required.

Figure 4

Zoning



3.0 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The park will be managed in accordance with the ministry's planning and management policies for recreation class parks. [14] Some specific actions to be undertaken are outlined below. For more information on resource characteristics and development capability analysis see the Background Information document. [9:4-15]

3.1 Land-form

Land-form management will focus on protecting identified natural values while providing recreational opportunities. Bluff areas will be protected from erosion by maintaining tree cover and by managing recreational use. Impacted sections of trails, particularly at steep areas, will be protected by re-routing or where necessary, by mechanical means such as wooden platforms, stairways or trail surfacing.

3.2 Water

Water quality will be managed to ensure safe swimming areas and drinking water. The water quality of bathing areas along the Ottawa River will be monitored by the Ottawa/Carleton Health Unit in accordance with approved testing procedures to ensure human health and safety. Fluctuating water levels along the Ottawa River, due to variations in releases from the hydro generating station, are to be expected. No management schemes will be undertaken to alter the low water levels along the Carp River which are common in summer. However, stream flow over Silver Falls may be augmented by a series of low check dams. Drinking water will be regularly tested for quality in accordance with park operating procedures.

3.3 Vegetation

The objectives of vegetation management are to provide attractive settings for recreation, to provide opportunities for appreciation of a range of man-influenced habitats and to ensure personal safety in the park.

Co-operation with Ontario Hydro will be sought to limit vegetation control along their rights-of-way in the park to non-chemical, selective methods whereby aesthetic considerations will accompany Ontario Hydro objectives.

Existing pine plantations will be thinned so as to promote the seeding in of deciduous plants, to result in a more natural appearance and species mix. The ultimate aim will be self-sustaining mixed associations appropriate to the site. Timber produced from thinning operations will be used for park purposes or marketed and when plantations reach a more natural appearance, thinning activity will cease. Periodic mowing in the open field to the north of the present park entrance building will maintain the opening and the associated ecological and visual diversity along a potential trail system. Old fields between the Pine Grove Campground and the base of the bluff will be left undisturbed to allow natural infilling to continue.

Poison ivy is prevalent in the park. It will be eradicated in areas where the chances of park users contacting it are greatest. The use of herbicides may be required to control vegetation at the sewage lagoon. Application of herbicides will follow the Pesticides Act and Regulations and the approval of the Regional Director.

Spraying with insecticides or fungicides will be initiated to control diseases and insects affecting vegetation only if health,

environmental quality or adjacent properties are threatened. Otherwise, plant diseases will be tolerated.

Any wild fires will be extinguished in keeping with provinvcial fire management policies and plans. [6]

Grass will be mowed in development areas as needed and in the old field on the upper terrace.

Within the development zone and along trails, trees will be removed only as required for safety. Selective thinning will be allowed along upper ridges to maintain scenic views from picnic areas. Mixed native species will be planted in the campground extension area following a proposed campground layout plan. The balance of this field above the main beach will be mowed periodically. A vegetation management plan including mowing specifications will be prepared.

3.4 Wildlife

The objective of wildlife management is to retain fauna diversity and habitat and to enhance wildlife viewing and interpretive opportunities while recognizing recreational objectives and the limited size of the park. Hunting is not permitted in Fitzroy Provincial Park. Trapping of nuisance animals will be undertaken following a wildlife management plan to be prepared and approved by the Regional Director.

3.5 Cultural Resources

The cultural resources management objective is to protect the identified historical features and sites within the park and to support visitor exploration and appreciation and scientific research.

An archaeological investigation will be conducted at the Shirreff home site. Findings will be used in an on-site interpretive display on these early residents, if practical. Foundations will be stabilized. Other home site ruins and the burial-ground will be noted in park literature and possibly through small outdoor exhibit panels, but further archaeological work is not required.

In addition, the protection of resources outside the park, such as the remains of the Chats Falls timber slide on land owned by Ontario Hydro, will be sought through co-operation with appropriate agencies and individuals. Ontario Hydro will be encouraged to interpret and protect the remains of this device used prior to the construction of the Chats Falls dam to allow timber rafts to travel over the falls.

4.0 CLIENT SERVICES

4.1 Visitor services

The visitor services objective is to provide information and facilities for the enjoyment of park visitors. Communications will inform visitors about the park, the provincial park system and Fitzroy's role in it. Visitors will be oriented to facilities and attractions in the park, the local area and the National Capital.

The park's resources will be interpreted through a variety of self-use trails and exhibits. The amphitheatre will continue to be used for occasional special events and programs.

Interpretive themes are preglacial and postglacial geology and geomorphology, economic development including the fur trade, square timber logging, early agriculture and the early settlements associated with these developments. Features relating to these themes include the Rockcliffe and Oxford geological formations, the Shirreff family and the founding of Fitzroy Harbour.

No organized outdoor recreation programs or activities will be provided. Opportunities will be available for informal open field sports and cross-country skiing. As well, a creative playground will be developed near the beach.

School groups will be encouraged to use the park for outdoor education purposes and information packages will be available to assist this use.

Visitor services plans at the park and regional levels have been prepared. They provide further direction to visitor service efforts consistent with these guidelines. [8]

5.0 DEVELOPMENT

In keeping with the goal to provide a range of year-round recreational opportunities and to encourage the appreciation of the Ottawa Valley heritage, development is proposed as outlined below. Development will proceed according to Figure 5, these guidelines and appropriate site plans.

5.1 Administration

To reduce staffing requirements, park office and park entry control functions will be handled at one location. The park office building will be moved to a new site along the entrance road as shown in Figure 5. Maintenance functions will remain at the present site. The woodyard will be reduced in size.

The feasibility of providing daily operation of the park through a contract agreement will be investigated for the 1985 season.

5.2 Traffic

The appropriate traffic circulation adjustments will be made to accommodate the new office location. Site plans will be prepared. Minor adjustments will also be made to ensure safe traffic flow at other intersections.

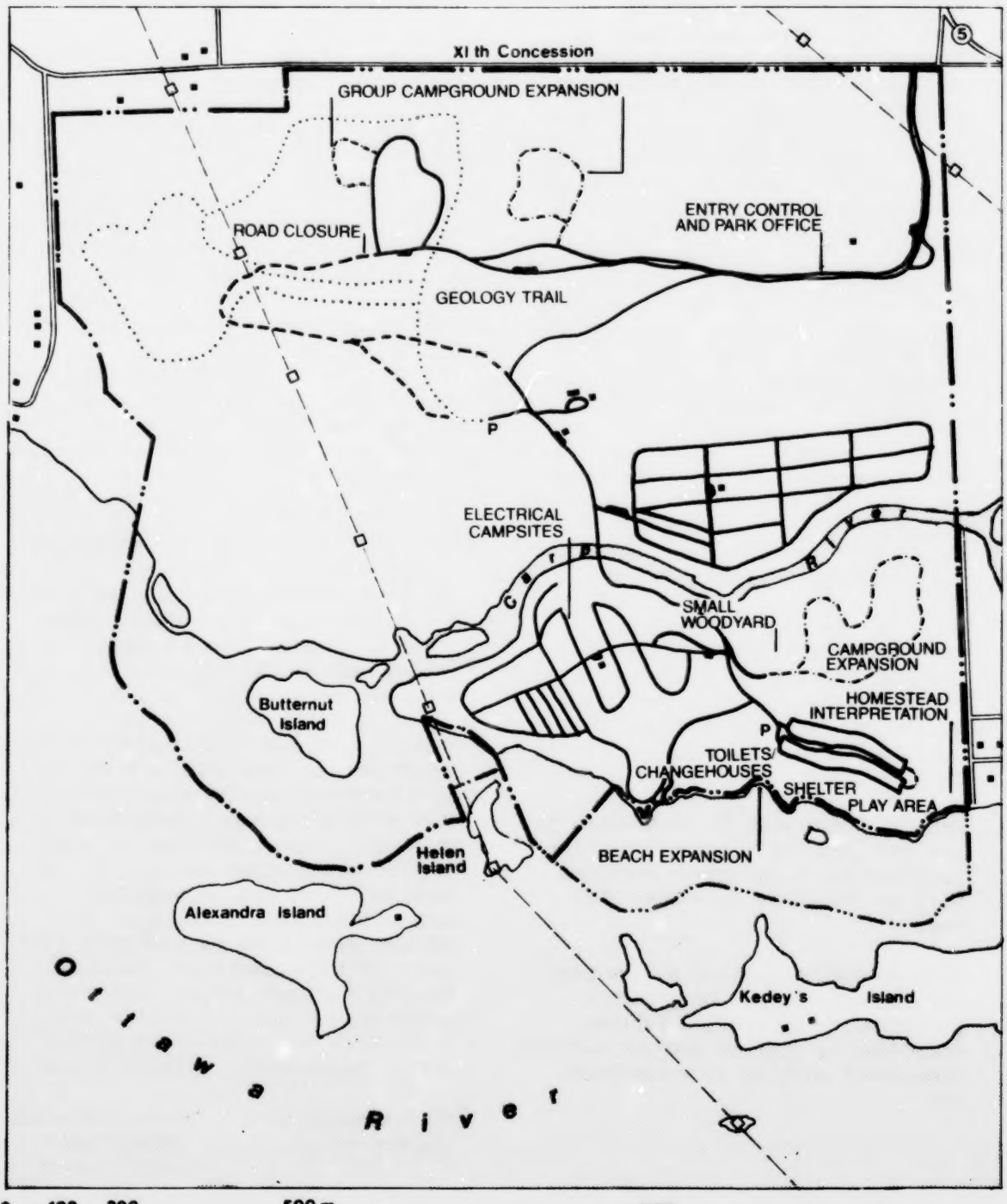
A section of road looping beyond the group camping area and back to the main park road at the maintenance area will be closed. See Figure 5. This road closure will not affect traffic circulation and will allow development of the geology trail with minimal road crossings. A parking area using part of this road north of the amphitheatre will be developed to serve trail and amphitheatre users.

5.3 Campgrounds

The campgrounds will be studied with respect to site size, impact and

Figure 5

Proposed development



vegetation renewal. A plan will be prepared to designate sites for specific camping equipment types and to upgrade impacted areas. Approximately 24 sites in Two Rivers Campground will be provided with electrical service in an area suited to this use.

An area suitable for additional camping has been identified at the back of the field above the day use beach. This facility will be developed according to a site plan as demand warrants. An additional 16,307 camping opportunities would be provided annually by this development. A planting plan will be prepared to direct planting in anticipation of future development. See Figure 5. For a discussion of alternative sites examined for this expansion see the Background Information document. [9:15,16]

5.4 Group Campgrounds

An area has been identified for expansion of the group camp area should demand warrant. Fitzroy has the highest use by groups in the eastern region. A separate additional area has been identified nearby. Before these areas are developed, portions of the Two Rivers Campground, now underused during May and June, will be made available for group use.

5.5 Beach Facilities

An additional 115 m of beach could be developed between the main beach and the boat launch. Use of the beach area frequently reaches capacity due to proximity to Ottawa. The grassed area between the two beaches could provide additional picnicking. This development would provide annually an additional 15,684 swimming opportunities and 3984 picnicking opportunities. Development will be directed by site plans and will proceed when demand warrants.

5.6 Trails

Connections with proposed hiking trail systems along the Ottawa Valley will be accommodated and encouraged as the trails develop. Existing trails and old roadways will serve as walking routes. A self-guiding interpretive trail will be developed along the bluff and in the northeast corner of the park to highlight geological and geomorphological features.

The park is open in winter for cross-country skiing. Marked ski trails are provided. A separate corridor will be designated for snowmobiles to traverse the park.

The traditional pedestrian access from the Village of Fitzroy Harbour will continue in the southeast corner of the park. The Village of Fitzroy Harbour will be consulted if changes are proposed regarding this access.

5.7 Visitor Services Facilities

Emphasis will be on improving communications, particularly relating to self-use information, recreation and interpretive facilities. Facilities proposed are a children's creative playground; the geological interpretive trail; an in-situ display of findings from the Shirreff/Henderson site; and another in-situ display or marker at the pioneer burial-ground. This will be limited to interpretive signs and demarcation of the burial-ground. Should funding become available and interest be expressed from other sources, more elaborate interpretation is acceptable.

Publications proposed are a history of the Fitzroy Harbour area, trail guides and checklists of natural phenomena such as birds, reptiles, trees and old field plant species.

6.0 IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY

The following projects will be undertaken with the approval of this management plan. Those completed will depend on Ministry of Natural Resources' priorities for capital funding. The management plan will be reviewed over its 20 year term as the need arises.

On-going Projects

- prepare vegetation management plan
- investigate contracting of daily park operations
- upgrade existing campsites where required
- undertake planting program for campground expansion area
- thin park plantations to convert to mixed stand and natural appearance. Use tree spade to relocate some specimens to campground.
- revise park regulations to include 11.4 ha water area

Phase I

- relocate park office
- close and rehabilitate road looping beyond group camp to main park road near maintenance yard
- develop self-guiding interpretive geology and geomorphology trail

Phase II

- electrify 24 campsites in Two Rivers Campground
- improve existing campground layout
- develop new beach as demand warrants

Phase III

- conduct archaeological excavation and interpret Shirreff site
- develop creative playground at beach
- install check dams to augment flow along Silver Falls stream
- develop campground as required

7.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Comment on the park's future management was invited during the management planning process. Background information and a questionnaire was sent to 120 people who responded to local newspaper advertisements. Of these, 45 completed and returned the questionnaire. Comments and suggestions were evaluated and addressed in the preliminary management plan. News releases were sent to local radio stations and newspapers announcing an open house meeting to review this preliminary management plan. Representatives from local governments and interest groups were invited. Following the open house, a display and copies of the plan were available at the park office for the remainder of the park season. Response to the preliminary management plan was minimal. No major concerns were raised. Incorporating some minor changes and updating, this approved management plan then confirms the park policies set out in the 1984 preliminary management plan. It will guide the management of Fitzroy Provincial Park for the next 20 years.

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